

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein."

(Jeremiah 6:16)

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GOD'S PLAN FOR RELIGIOUS UNITY

Jimmy W. Bates

Ephesians 4:4-6. The sin of religious division is one, if not the greatest, hindrance to the Lord's cause today! The Bible is God's revealed will to man and points to the necessity of UNITY among men. When men follow God's revealed will they will be united. Division occurs when men reject God's will.

For Unity to exist, there must be a **Standard** (a body of Truth) to which **all** men must comply. God is the source of All Truth (John 8:32; 17:17). God revealed this Truth through Jesus Christ (John 7:16; 12:48-50; Heb. 1:1,2; John 14:6). Jesus revealed this Truth to His Apostles (John 17:8,17,20,21). After Jesus ascended back to heaven, the Holy Spirit came to guide the Apostles and other men in recording this body of Truth and we have it today in the written word of God (John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 2:1-5; II Tim. 3:16,17; Jude 3; Gal. 1:6-12).

The **Standard** to which all men must comply is the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2; I Cor. 9:21), which is: the Truth (John 17:17; 8:32); the Gospel (Rom. 1:16); the Faith (Jude 3; Acts 6:7; 13:7,8; Rom. 5:1; Gal. 3:26,27); Sound Doctrine (Titus 2:1); the Doctrine of Christ (II John 9-11). Unity is achieved by all those who accept and follow God's standard — The Truth.

What Is Bible Unity? The word "**Unity**" is from the Greek word *enotias* — "One, unity, unanimity, agreement" (Thayer p.217). The New World Dictionary defines UNITY as "The state of being one, or united; oneness; singleness...." **Unity** is dif-

ferent from "**Union**" which is a "combination...a combining, joining, or grouping together..." (New World Dictionary). Religious Unity has been falsely associated with: **Diversity** — "quality, state, fact, or instance of being diverse; difference;" **Diverse** — "different; dissimilar;" **Diversion** — "a diverting, or turning aside" (New World Dictionary). This is what most of the so-called "unity Movements" today are — diversions!

What Bible Unity Is NOT: 1) Unity is NOT "Union." 2) Unity is NOT "Diversity." 3) Unity is NOT "Agreeing to disagree." 4) Unity is NOT "Going along to get along." 5) Unity is NOT "Turning one's back and ignoring the difference." 6) Unity is NOT "Ecumenical cooperation."

Bible Unity involves Oneness, Singleness, Truth, Harmony: I Peter 3:8, "*Be ye all of one mind.*" Phil. 2:5, Having the mind of Christ. John 17:20,21, As God and Christ are one. In I Cor. 1:10, Paul told the Corinthians that by the authority of Christ, they were all to "speak the same thing," "that there be no divisions among you," "that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

The Need For Unity: Man, in general, has always rejected Unity and promoted Division. Denominationalism promotes religious division. Liberal minded brethren promote division in the church. Contentious, "opinion binding" brethren promote division in the church.

Division is Sinful. By it's very

nature, division weakens and destroys. "United we stand, divided we fall." "...*Every Kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation: and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand*" (Matt. 12:25). Internal division weakens and sometimes destroys congregations of the Lord's people (Gal. 5:15). Religious division is possibly the greatest hinderance to the cause of Christ (John 17:20,21). The Bible condemns division (Gen. 13:8; Prov. 6:16-19; Matt. 12:25; Rom. 16:18; I Cor. 1:10-13; I Cor. 3:3; I Cor. 12:25; James 3:13-16). All Bible passages that demand Unity, by implication, condemn division.

Some Causes of Division.

First, a "*self-willed*" attitude causes division. One who is dominated by self-interest (a desire to please self) (Rom. 16:18; Titus 1:7; Gal. 1:10). Second, a *contentious attitude* of "rule or destroy" causes division, a greed for authority, pre-eminence (III John 9). Contentious individuals cause strife and division (I Cor. 1:11; Titus 3:9,10; Rom. 2:5-9). Third, a *lack of respect for and knowledge of the Word of God as authority in religion* causes division (Col. 3:17; I Peter 4:11; I Thess. 5:21). This is following the traditions and creeds of men (Mark. 7:7-9; I Cor. 3:3). This is following human names (I Cor. 1:12,13) and human doctrines (I Tim. 1:3; II John 9-11). Fourth, *rebellion against the Truth of God* lies at the

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Religious Unity...



Editorial...

QUESTIONS ON BAPTISM AND SALVATION #1

Found below are excerpts of a letter from one who believes that salvation is by “faith only.” This is typical of the denominational world. Sadly, those who once embraced the truth among us are now moving more and more in this direction. We sometimes hear comments made by those who think of themselves as members of the “church of Christ” like: “there are sincere, devout Christians in all the denominations,” “there are many sincere Christians who have never been immersed,” “man cannot contribute one thing to his salvation,” “salvation is by grace, 100%,” etc. etc.

Some of the statements from this letter are in italics. Following each of these statements is an examination from the Scriptures.

Satan cannot take away anything from the conditions of salvation or the plan of salvation, for God has already reduced it to an irreducible minimum. If Satan is to confound the minds of sinners he must do so by addition, not subtraction.

Where does the Bible teach that Satan cannot take anything away from God’s conditions for salvation? NOWHERE! I notice the absence of a Scripture for your assertion. Your statement is an assumption that is not backed up in Scripture. Scripture can be both “added to” and “taken from.” This is stated in both the Old and New Testaments (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19). Satan and his ministers often appear as angels of light or angels of righteousness (II Cor. 11:14-25). However, they are still doing the devil’s work.

There are no conditions to salvation. Salvation is a simple fact to be believed, Satan’s method of deceiving men has been to add to the simplicity of the gospel.

If there are no conditions to salvation as you claim, then why do you make “belief” a condition? You teach

that only those who “believe” will be saved and those who do not believe will be lost. This makes belief a condition to salvation as per your own “logic.”

The Bible certainly teaches that belief (faith) is a condition to salvation (John 8:24; John 14:6; Mark 16:16; Heb. 11:6). It, therefore, is essential to salvation! But it also makes clear that belief by itself (“faith only”) will not save anyone. Many believed on Jesus in John 12:42-43, but will not be saved because they refused to “confess” Him. The devil even believes in Jesus but will not be saved (James 2:19). God in heaven above makes clear to us that the man-made doctrine of salvation by “faith only” without “works” (obedience) is dead and barren (James 2:17,20). James 2:24 says, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, **and not by faith only.**” God could be no clearer than what He says here. There is no misunderstanding this verse. Whatever it is that brings about justification (salvation), one thing is clear, **IT IS NOT BY FAITH ONLY.**

Noah was saved from the flood by faith, but only WHEN he obeyed (worked) God’s command to build the ark (Heb. 11:7). Did he have to build the ark or not? He was not saved by “faith only.”

Abraham was justified before God by faith, but only WHEN he obeyed (worked) God’s command to offer Isaac (James 2:21-23). He was not justified by “faith only.” There have always been conditions that men must meet in order to please God.

Some teach that salvation is by faith and good works; or, salvation is by faith and baptism; or, salvation is by faith plus church membership; or, salvation is by faith plus repentance. These are all attempts to darken the mind of the man.

The Bible clearly teaches...

Those who do not “believe” cannot be saved (Mark 16:16).

Those who do not “repent” cannot be saved (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30).

Those who do not “confess” faith in Christ cannot be saved (Rom. 10:9-10; Matt. 10:32-33; Acts 8:37).

Those who are not “baptized” in water cannot be saved (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3-18).

In light of what you said above (that salvation is not by faith AND baptism), isn’t it interesting that Jesus said, “he that *believeth* AND is *baptized* shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Those who believe in “faith only” need to teach the Lord He needs to go back and re-word Mark 16:16. Since Jesus said “he that believeth AND IS baptized shall be saved,” no man on earth can add to it or take away from it by saying, “he that believeth and is NOT baptized shall be saved.”

Those who do not live the rest of their lives in faithfulness to the Lord and His word cannot be saved (Rev. 2:10; I Cor. 15:58; Matt. 10:22).

There is only one word that represents all a sinner can do and must do to be saved and that word is BELIEVE. Repentance is not the means by which we acquire eternal life. Acts 13:48-49 says that “as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.” Not, “repent and believe.” Simply, “believe.” Acts 16:31 teaches the same, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved,” Repentance is not a condition. Eternal life is by faith alone — sola fide!

James 2:14-26 destroys once and for all the man-made doctrine of “faith only.” Verse 14, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” The answer is NO. Verse 17, “Even so **faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.**” Verse 18, “...I will shew thee my faith by my **works.**” Verse 19, “...the devils also believe, and tremble.” Verse 20, “**...faith without works is dead.**” Verse 21, Abraham was justified by **works** WHEN he had offered Isaac. Verse 22, faith wrought with his works, and **by works, his faith was made perfect.** Verse 24, “by works a man is justified, and **not by faith only.**” Verse 25, Rahab was justified by works, WHEN she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? Verse 26, “faith without

works is dead.”

Salvation is by faith, yes, but NOT BY FAITH ONLY. Man cannot earn or deserve salvation. It is a gift from God. However, man must comply with God's commands in order to receive the gift. Jesus said, “*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say*” (Luke 6:46)? He also said, “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that DOETH the will of my Father which is in heaven*” (Matt 7:21). Jesus is the author of salvation to them that OBEY him (Heb. 5:8-9). He does not give salvation to those who DO NOT OBEY him.

OBEDIENCE demands CONDITIONS. One can't obey unless there are conditions (commands) to obey. The writer of this letter admits/concedes FAITH is one such condition. However, examination of Scripture shows that faith is not the only condition. Jesus also requires repentance, confession and water baptism (Acts 2:38; Acts 8:37; Mark 16:16).

When Paul and Silas told the jailor to believe, he did not know what to believe. After taking them to his house and washing their stripes, he was told what to believe and what salvation required. He did not hesitate to comply by being baptized in the middle of the night (Acts 16:33). It is handling the word of deceitfully to take a verse away from those verses around it (its context). ALL the Bible has to say on a subject must be considered before one jumps to a conclusion and imagine a doctrine the Bible does not teach.

There is only ONE plan of salvation, not two, three or more. No person is told one thing while another person is told something else. Everyone is told the same thing when we consider the complete revelation of God's will. For example, the jailor was told to believe (Acts 16:31) and afterward, he was baptized. The man from Ethiopia was told to confess and then he was baptized (Acts 8:37-38). The people on Pentecost were told to repent and be

baptized (Acts 2:38). We don't read of anything that Lydia was told. All we read is that she was baptized (Acts 16:14-15). Those in Corinth heard, believed and were baptized (Acts 18:8). So, what's the conclusion from all these accounts. They were not told different plans of salvation. They were all told the same thing and they all did the same thing. They **heard** the Gospel, they **believed**, **repented**, **confessed** and were **baptized**. That is God's plan of salvation for ALL mankind. All must do the same thing to receive the same reward.

All of these conditions are God's conditions, not man's conditions. Man did not dream up any of these things. All of these things are the WORKS of God, not the works of man. These are the works God commands man to obey. Even God's command for man to believe is a work that man must obey. It is God's work, not man's (John 6:29). He devised the work, man must comply by performing it.

“IN SEASON AND OUT OF SEASON”

Tom Wacaster

Growth! We long for the increase. We pray frequently and work fervently to this end, beseeching our God that He might give us the increase. So, why is it that our efforts bear so little fruit? Why are we not bursting at the seams? I can well remember the 1960s (with occasional flash-backs into the 50s), when cottage classes were not only popular, they were powerful and profitable! Even into the 1970s our evangelistic efforts produced a harvest of souls to the glory of our God. But somewhere along the way, things began to change, and it became increasingly difficult to find that good and honest heart willing to listen and ready to obey. In addition, the seeds of liberalism were sown in the 50s and 60s, and we are now reaping the harvest of the tares sown by the enemies of God. Back then we did not have such blatant denial of authority, fellowship with the denominations, and the appeal to the flesh that now plagues our Lord's church. There was a far greater respect for the Scriptures, and a deeper interest in a study of the same on the part of members of the

Lord's church. Add to this the full harvest of humanism and we begin to see why growth has slowed and interest in spiritual things has tapered off.

I recently read of a brother in Christ who has been a Christian since 1939. Baptized at a young age, he immediately became active in teaching others while growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. His observation is strikingly familiar. He observed that it has become increasingly more difficult to interest the lost in a study of the Bible. Yes, the devil has done his work, and we are the less fortunate for it.

It should also be observed that fewer individuals are willing to make a deep seated commitment to Christ. Often studies are canceled part of the way through because the student can see where the studies are leading and what it will cost them with regard to change. How shall we react to this changing atmosphere? Paul stated it clearly when he told Timothy, “*I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke,*

exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (II Tim. 4:1-2). One old preacher paraphrased that passage: “Preach it when they want it, and when they don't want it.” Our obligation is to preach and teach. We must leave the numbers business in the Lord's hands and concentrate on our responsibility of getting the word out. The three N's of Noise, Nickels and Numbers (as one brother called it) must not become our modus-operandi. While some congregations are abandoning the old paths to walk in the footsteps of the denominations, let us determine that we will not only walk in those old paths, but that we will proclaim it unto others.

We must never forget that there are three important factors when it comes to saving the lost. There is *the will of God*, who does not want any to perish. There is *the will of the teacher*, who longs for the increase and salvation of those near and dear to him. Finally, there is *the will of the lost individual*. It is the last which has changed in the past twenty years.

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WHAT RELATIONSHIP DO COLLEGES HAVE TO THE CHURCH?

Jerry C. Brewer

The answer to the above question is, “There is none.” The college is neither the church, a work of the church, a part of the church, nor an adjunct of the church. The college is first, last, and always, an adjunct or extension of the home. While many so-called “Christian” colleges have people on their staffs who are denominated, “Vice President For Church Relations,” the Bible knows nothing of “church schools.” Neither is there any Bible authority for churches to support colleges from their treasuries. That question, which was debated nearly seven decades ago, persists to this day as colleges go begging churches for money.

What, then, is the “Bible college?” It is an auxiliary indeed, but not to the church. Let us observe in this connection the mission of the home and the duty of parents toward their children. Solomon said: “Train up a child in the way he should go.” Paul said: “Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” This is the solemn obligation of the parent and the sacred mission of the home. But when the child reaches a certain “school age,” when it must pass from the home into the school, does the responsibility of the parent cease? Is it not still the serious duty of the parent to select the school where the influence of the home is continued? In this matter, then, the school simply takes the place of the home and the teacher assumes the responsibility of the parent. So the “Bible college,” or the “Christian college,” or whatever you may please to call it, is no more than auxiliary to the home. It supplements the work of the home. Some who have not made proper discrimination have wrought confusion by associating the “Bible college” with the work of

the church. Others have, therefore opposed it on the ground that it is a “church school,” while others think it is wrong and sinful to teach the Bible in school. Such a conclusion should drive the Bible from our homes also and force the conclusion that it can be taught only in the meetinghouse on Sunday! These principles are fundamental. Let us draw the lines clearly. We have pointed out the central thought of the subject — namely, the school as an auxiliary of the home. This being true, it is not the business of the church to run it. The church is not in the school business. The only way the church can Scripturally do its work is through the elders of the local congregation. Appeals made to churches, therefore, in behalf of schools are wrong — fundamentally wrong — wrong in principle. Let the school stand where it belongs, apart from the church, as an aid to, and adjunct of, the home. Let parents and individuals realize their duty and feel their responsibility in the support and maintenance of them, thus making it possible for our children and our neighbors’ children to have the training and influence they so much need and deserve. (Foy E. Wallace, Jr., “Concerning Colleges,” *The Bible Banner*; Sept. 1938, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp.2)

The church is charged with preaching the Gospel to the lost, not with rearing and educating children. When it presumes to financially support a college from its budget, it usurps the authority and responsibility that God granted the home and infringes upon the obligations of parents. It is the God-ordained function of the home to educate its offspring. That function does not belong to the church.

To grant that the home is a divine institution does not warrant the conclusion that everything related to the home may have the same relation to the church. The state is also a divine institution. (Rom. 13). Shall every auxiliary of the state be made adjuncts of the church? The home and the church fill distinctly different spheres. One is the sphere of moral right and privilege; the other is the realm of Scriptural authority. In the home, anything right, right in itself, is permissible; in the church, only what the New Testament authorizes, a “Thus saith the Lord.” Christ is not only head of the church, but he is head over all things to the church. (Eph. 1:22-23.) Secular education is not the work of the church. But Christian men and women have the same right to conduct such schools as they have to engage in the mercantile business, farming, banking, publishing houses, or any other honorable business. They also have the right as individuals to teach the Bible in such schools as in any other sphere of individual life. Such schools should not derive their names from the Bible any more than from science, mathematics, philosophy, and other knowledge it imparts. In choosing the atmosphere in which to educate their children, it is not only the right of parents, but their duty, to choose schools in which the influence of the home will be continued. The teacher assumes the responsibility of the parents and the school supplements the work of the home. It furnishes no parallel for institutions and organizations which supplant the church. (Foy E. Wallace, Jr., “The Home And The School,” *The Bible Banner*; Vol. 1, No. 3, Sept., 1938, p.3)

Colleges, both private and public,

have a right to exist. Their existence is neither a violation of civil law nor God's law. We are not anti-college, but so-called "Christian" colleges do not exist as adjuncts of the church and the church has no Scriptural authority to contribute money to them.

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Religious Unity...

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root of all division (I Tim. 4:1-3; II Tim. 4:1-5).

Defending the Truth and exposing error DOES NOT cause division, but rather promotes Unity. As Elijah stated in I Kings 18:18, forsaking the commandments of God causes division. Compare: Phil. 1:17; Jude 3; Eph. 5:11; II Tim. 4:2-5.

Unity is good, right, and pleasant (Psalm 133:1). There is strength and success in Unity. The strong and successful church in Jerusalem was united (Acts 4:32). An essential ingredient to the growth of the church is Bible Unity. The Bible commands unity (John 17:20,21; I Cor. 1:10; II Cor. 13:11; Phil. 1:27; Phil. 2:2; I Peter 3:8).

There are **Attitudes and Actions necessary To Unity**: In Ephesians 4:1-3, Paul speaks of the unity that is to characterize our attitude and life: "...Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." "Vocation" (*klaseos*) — A "calling" which involves that manner of conduct or way of living into which God has called us through the Gospel (II Thess. 2:14): 1) A High Calling (Phil. 3:14). 2) A Holy Calling (II Tim. 1:9). 3) A Heavenly Calling (Heb. 3:1). We are to walk "worthy" (adverb of manner — worthily). Our life and conduct must become the Gospel. (Compare: Rom. 16:2; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:10; I Thess. 2:12).

Our lives are to be characterized by "Lowliness" — Humility — (v.2). Jesus is an example of lowliness (Matt. 11:28-30; John 13:3-17; Phil. 2:3-9). We must practice lowliness (James 4:6; I Peter 5:6; Romans 12:3). How does one develop Lowliness? 1) Look into your spiritual mirror (James 1:23-25); 2) Compare yourself to Christ (II Cor. 10:12; Eph.

5:1,2; II Cor. 3:18).

Humility is necessary to Unity. Our lives are to be characterized by "meekness" — submission (v.2), which is the strength to control one's actions — self discipline (James 1:19-21; cf. I Peter 3:4,15; James 3:13; Gal. 5:22,23; 6:1). Also "longsuffering" — (v.2) — "To suffer long" — patient (II Tim. 4:1,2), a spirit that never gives up (James 5:10; Rev. 2:10; I Peter 5:10; cf. Gal. 5:22; I Cor. 13:4; Col. 3:12). "Forbearing one another in love" (v.2), means "to bear with" — the practical application of longsuffering — the attitude put in action (cf. Col. 3:13). "In love" regulates all of a Christian's attitude toward others. We must give diligent effort to keep unity and peace in the church (v.3) (cf. Col. 3:15; Rom. 12:18). We serve the God of peace (I Thess. 5:23; I Cor. 14:33). Our Lord is the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6; Eph. 2:14). The church is a Kingdom of Peace (Rom. 14:17,19). The Gospel is the Gospel of Peace (Eph. 6:15).

We must not compromise truth to have peace and unity. When truth is compromised, there can be no peace and unity. We endeavor to keep the unity God describes in Ephesians 4:4-6.

GOD'S PLAN FOR UNITY. *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all"* (Eph. 4:4-6).

All must *worship and serve* the ONE GOD (cf. I Cor. 8:6; Heb. 11:6; Matt. 4:10; John 4:23,24). We cannot have unity with one who worships and serves another god.

All must *submit to the authority* of the ONE LORD (cf. I Cor. 8:5,6; Acts 2:36; 10:36; John 8:23,24; Heb. 1:1-3; Matt. 28:18; Acts 3:22,23; 17:5). To submit to Him as Lord is to obey Him (Luke 6:46; Heb. 5:8,9). We cannot have unity with one who rejects the authority of the One Lord!

All must *believe and obey the Truth* revealed by the ONE SPIRIT (cf. John 16:13; I Cor. 2:13; II Peter 1:20,21; II Tim. 3:16,17; Rom. 8:1-5). We cannot have unity with one who rejects the Truth revealed by the One Spirit (II Thess. 2:10-12).

All must *desire* the ONE HOPE (v.4). Hope is a longing desire of confident expectation. The main object

of Hope is eternal life in heaven (I Peter 1:3,4; Heb. 6:17-19; Rom.8:24; Titus 1:2; I John 2:25; Rom. 12:12; II Tim. 4:6-8). There is only One Hope, thus only one way to go to heaven. We are called into this one hope by the Gospel (II Thess. 2:14; II Thess. 1:7-9). We cannot have unity with one who does not desire the One Hope!

All must *believe and teach* the ONE FAITH (cf. Jude 3; Acts 6:7; Gal. 1:23). The One Faith is the same as the Gospel (Phil. 1:17,27; Rom. 1:16; 10:17; I Cor. 15:1-4). We cannot have unity with one who does not believe and teach the One Faith (cf. I Cor. 1:10; Phil. 2:2; I Peter 4:11; Gal. 1:6-9; I John 4:1; II John 9-11; Rom. 16:17,18).

All must *practice* the ONE BAPTISM (v.5). There had been other baptisms in the past: 1) unto Moses (I Cor. 10:1-3), 2) John's baptism (Acts 19:1-5), 3) Baptism of suffering (Matt. 20:22,23), 4) of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11), 5) there will be a baptism of fire in the future (Matt. 3:10-12). But, when Paul wrote Ephesians (A.D. 62,63), there was only one baptism. Jesus had commanded it and it was/is to last unto the end of the world (Matt. 28:18-20).

The one baptism is a burial in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3,4). It is administered by man (Matt. 28:19,20). It puts one into Christ where salvation is (II Tim. 2:10; Gal. 3:26,27; Mark 16:16). We cannot have unity with one who rejects the One Baptism!

All must *be in* the ONE BODY (v.4; cf. I Cor. 12:13; Rom. 12:4-5; I Cor. 12:27; Eph. 5:30). The One Body is the "one church" (Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18; Matt. 16:18). Jesus is the Savior of the "one body" (Eph. 5:23). We cannot have unity with one who is not in the One Body!

Let us all endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace!" Not by compromising "union meetings" that are falsely called "unity movements." But, by following God's plan for unity. Every Christian is obligated to help maintain unity, peace, and harmony in the church, in keeping with God's plan!

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SINGING SPIRITUAL SONGS

Roger D. Campbell

Jesus taught that worship to the God of heaven must be done in spirit and truth (John 4:24). One aspect of our worship is singing praises to Jehovah. We should remember that though we sing praises to God in our public worship services, singing spiritual songs is not restricted to the Lord's day or other times of public worship assemblies. What does the New Testament teach about singing in spirit and in truth?

What are the New Testament verses that mention singing? Some passages in the New Testament mention music or singing which have nothing to do with worshipping God. Others mention music or singing in heaven. However, for our purposes, we want to notice the New Testament verses that specifically speak of God's people on the earth singing songs of praise to Him.

"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives" (Matt. 26:30 and Mark 14:25). "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang hymns unto God" (Acts 16:25). "And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this reason I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name" (Rom. 15:9). "...I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (I Cor. 14:15). "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). "Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee" (Heb. 2:12). "...Is any merry? Let him sing psalms" (James 5:13).

From this list we see that at least nine books of the New Testament give instruction about singing or show us examples of those that sang praises to the Lord. While it is plain that the Bible commands us to sing praises to God, it is equally clear that

nowhere in the teaching of the Christ is it stated that we are authorized to use mechanical instruments of music in our worship to Him. Respecting the authority of the Bible, we thus sing songs of praise without such mechanical instruments.

Who should sing? All Christians should sing praises to God. Sometimes it is thought that only those who sing well should participate in the singing. Some brothers do not sing during worship services because they feel they do not sing well, and do not want to be embarrassed or hinder others. But the Bible instructs all Christians to sing. Please read again Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, which were written to all the saints of those congregations, not just to those who sang well. Partaking of the Lord's supper is a command for all Christians (I Cor. 11:24,25). So is singing. It would be just as wrong not to participate in the singing as it would be not to partake of the Lord's supper!

What should Christians sing? Remember, we are talking about what we should sing when we worship God. If you enjoy singing popular songs, patriotic songs, or other songs that are not related to praising the God of heaven, that is fine (as long as they do not involve inappropriate lyrics). But, when we worship, we are to sing certain kinds of songs when we praise God. What are those? They are "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). The spiritual songs that we sing have a variety of contents. We sing songs in which the words speak of our Creator, our Savior, the love of God, the cross of Jesus, His second coming, and many other Bible topics. We also sing songs by which we exhort one another to be holy and faithful in our service to the Master. The message of each song that we sing in worship should be based on or in harmony with the Bible. A number of songs that have been written in recent times actually take the exact words of the Bible and put them to a melody.

Why do Christians sing? The

purpose of our singing is not to impress other people and cause them to say that our singing sounds pretty. Again, we do not sing spiritual songs in order to entertain others. Christians sing because they are commanded to sing (Col. 3:16). Christians sing in order to praise God: "Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). When we sing praises to God, we do the following: We speak (Eph. 5:19), we speak to one another (Eph. 5:19), we teach (Col. 3:16), we teach one another (Col. 3:16), we admonish (Col. 3:16), and we admonish one another (Col. 3:16). Since we teach and admonish when we sing praises to God, then should we not make every effort to sing only those things which are true and in accord with the teachings of the Bible? Surely so.

How should Christians sing? We must sing by the authority of Jesus, for it is written, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). We should sing with the proper motive, which is to please and glorify God: "...whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31). We must sing with understanding (I Cor. 14:15). We should sing with happiness in our hearts, for it is written, "...Is any merry? Let him sing psalms" (James 5:13).

We should truly sing from our hearts, giving our full attention to the words we are singing. When we sing praises to God, let us think seriously about every word we sing, and let us truly mean what we sing. What would you call a person, who during worship services loudly sings that he loves God, then leaves the place of meeting and curses God or denies the Lord by his actions? The Bible calls such a person a hypocrite and blasphemer! Let us sing with sincerity, and support our singing with godly lives. Brethren, let us sing from the heart, just as we would if we were standing before the throne of God in heaven and singing praises to Him there. Let us not forget: when we sing songs of praise, God is the audience.

It is a privilege to worship the Lord God. It is an honor to speak to Him in prayer. It is an equal honor to praise Him in song. Few things inspire the soul like the sound of God's children blending their voices to praise the great I AM. May we take our singing seriously. Let each of us be totally committed to singing every spiritual song from the heart.

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LET'S NOT ATTACK THE DEVIL

Wayne Coats

Recently, two people were discussing the *Plumblin* paper. One said to the other, "I have just received my copy of the paper." The other said, "Who is he attacking this time?" As strange as it may sound to some people, I consider that quip a partial compliment. I do not attack persons, but the heretical and devilish doctrines which are being taught by false teachers. Is this wrong?

When Paul wrote to young Timothy he said, "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine...some having swerved aside unto vain jangling" (I Tim. 1:3,6). Timothy had the charge to deal with false teachers who taught false doctrine. He attacked the error but not the persons; albeit, I fail to see how one can disassociate heresy from heretics.

Paul attacked the blasphemy of Hymenaeus and Alexander (I Tim. 1:20). Of course he mentioned those two servants of satan. Can I do likewise? Are there any who are making shipwreck of the faith? Is the faith being overthrown? Should the *Plumblin* paper refuse to follow the inspired example of Paul? There are some papers out there which can utilize practically every word in the English language but they are as silent as the grave about Hymenaeus and Alexander who serve the devil. "For some are already turned aside after satan" (I Tim. 5:15). We must exercise extreme caution and never attack any of the errors of satan, so we are told.

We are aware of the fact that some good and faithful brethren experience the fact that some church members still act like Phygellus and Hermogenes (II Tim. 1:15). When brethren turn away from the truth, they turn *against* Christ. While under attack by the hounds of hell, one must always stand to face the enemy. It is too easy to run. Or is it? The Bible teaches us to stand (Rom. 5:2; I Cor. 16:13; Eph. 6:13).

I would be safe in saying that few present-day preachers have experienced more "profane and vain babblings" from false brethren than our dear old soldier of Christ who fought satan in days of yore. Such is a deadly form of canker which brother Hymenaeus and brother Philetus will bring into the congregation. Those two reprobates denied the resurrection and overthrew the faith of some but it appears that not a word should be said, lest trouble should develop. No sound paper or editor wants to cause trouble so that might be the reason some papers are so very mild, pacifistic, and all positive. The papers which the inspired apostle wrote spoke freely and fully of the traitors, heady and high-minded (II Tim. 3:4).

I know the grief and heartache experienced by the beloved apostle who was forsaken by Demas who had been his erstwhile brother. Should such creeps as Demas be left to indulge in their self-centered pleasures? Paul deserved more respect and better treatment than he received at the hands of Demas. The lowest of the low can be found among the ungrateful wretches who refuse to stand by faithful servants of Christ. How could any human be deserted who was as meek, humble, pure and holy as the aged Paul? Some of the meanest, cruelest, wretches living, are desirous of being called Christians. Such low, rotten, people do not want to be opposed, yet their life consists of opposing the truth and those who proclaim it.

You can subscribe to the *Plumblin* (\$5) at
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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

Joe Travis, joeftavis@yahoo.com, PO Box 2456, Angleton, TX 77516. Thank you for helping us get this word out. We hope that all is going well with you" ...**Gil Yoder**. "Please remove my name from your mailing list" ...**LaVerne Schubring, Schuamburg, IL**. "We have started receiving STOP on a regular basis and have thoroughly enjoyed the reading and appreciate so much your stand for the truth. We found out about it from our new preacher at Bohnam Street church of Christ in Paris, Texas (Marvin Weir). We would love to receive as many back issues as you might have available. We appreciate it very much" ...**Randy & Roxanne Ballard, Blossom, TX**. [NOTE: We try to keep a supply of back issues for those who would like to have extra copies. Just write us and let us know what you need.] "Please include my name on your mailing list. I have wanted the paper for years but didn't know how to obtain it. The Florence church of Christ in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, sent me some of their bulletins and included a copy of STOP. I was thrilled. What a blessing it is to me" ...**Sharon Daniel, Reyno, AR**. "Thank you for sending me STOP. It is good to have sound doctrine to learn from. Here at the Choice Moore Prison unit in Bonham, Texas, we do not have any church of Christ services for lack of volunteers to lead. We have 'Protestant' worship with a band, clapping, no baptisms and no Lord's supper. Any one who is in the North Texas area willing to volunteer to lead church of Christ services and provide the Lord's supper should call the unit warden or chaplain at 903-583-4464. Also, I ask for prayer and encouragement from the body of Christians out there for my wife Carrie and myself. She has told me she cannot be my wife any longer and it is really tough for me because I know divorce is not God's will (Malachi 2:16; I Cor. 7:10-11), but reconciliation is. Thank you" ...**Ryan Shield #1294594, 1700 N FM 87, Bonham, TX 75418**. "Refused" ...**Brian Cote, Anthem, AZ**. "Refused" ...**Paula Phillips, Anderson, AL**. Dear Friends at *Seek the Old Paths*, I send you warm greetings from all of us here at Focus Press. I hope that this email finds both your family and your work doing well. We print a paper called *Think*. The July issue is on the topic of abortion. In this special issue we interviewed Jane Roe (of Roe v. Wade), along with a young lady named Gianna Jessen whose mother tried to abort her. In addition to these two feature articles, we also have five additional articles that point out things like how we now know when life begins, when God views life to begin, and what impact abortion is having on our culture. Many states are currently reviewing their statutes on abortion (for instance South Dakota just passed the toughest laws against this horrible procedure), and we want to do all we can to better help inform Christians. It is my hope that Christians can pull the pendulum back and help this country regain some moral footing. If you have questions or would like additional information please don't hesitate to call (615) 324-5870" ...**Brad Harrub, Nashville, TN**. "I would like to be added to your mailing list to receive your publication. Thank you for your time and God bless you in your continued work for the Lord" ...**Jerry Sturgill, Ashland, KY**. "We appreciate so much the good work you are doing and may God richly bless your work" ...**Scott & Amy Williams, Athens, TX**. "I listen to your radio program via the Internet and as you know, your program is food for the soul. Thanks for such a program. I know that it is an inspiration for those that listen. I hope you are encouraged by this letter. For I know that many more people are encouraged as well. I began listening about one and a half years ago off and on. Recently I began listening more often. This program and sermons from the Forest Hill Church of Christ have been my pastime for the past three months. Even more so than watching television. Such I think is necessary. May God continue to bless your great effort in planting the seed of the word of God" ...**Lennard Curvan, Montreal, Canada**. "I really enjoy reading your paper very much. I am praying for your work and that God will continue to bless you" ...**Columbia, MS**. "I want to thank you for sending me STOP" ...**Larry Powers, Sharon, TN**. "My husband and I look forward to reading every issue of STOP. By the time he gets our copy, I have marked it up and hi-lighted almost every line. We appreciate the truth

"If you know of good brethren who are looking for a sound church to work with, please let them know about Richwood. They can get a little info about us at our web page: richwood.cofc.us. They should send resumes to us either through e-mail or mail one of the following addresses: Gil Yoder, yoder@oabs.org, 3732 Crescent Dr., Pearland, TX 77584,

being presented in this paper. I have watched closely the movement to join in fellowship with the Christian Church. Could you please provide me some other writings about the Christian Church that show other practices in this church that go against the teachings of Christ. Most of the articles deal only with the music, which I understand was the main reason for the original split, but I would like other information about the practices of this group. Thank you in advance for your assistance. Keep on keeping on!" ...**Darline Mazo, Corona, CA**. [NOTE: We printed some material on the Christian Church in the June and July 2002 issues of STOP. These can be found on the internet at: seektheoldpaths.com/stop2002.htm. Also, brother Dan Goddard has written several good articles about the Christian Church that can be found at: garden-city-coc.org]. "Great STOP in June 2006. Jim Boyd, as he always does, hit it on the head with his article concerning 'Campbellites.' WSOJ radio is great! Thanks!" ...**Jeff Archey, Cleveland, TN**. [NOTE: Anyone in the world can listen to Gospel preaching/teaching and congregational singing 24 hours a day at www.wsoj.net. This is a work of the East End Church of Christ in McMinnville, TN]. "We really enjoy reading it and would like to have back issues to read also. Thanks for your stand for the truth" ...**Randy Ballard, Blossom, TX**. "I recently came across a copy of STOP. You have had some very timely articles. It seems we have a tendency to drift away from the Bible. Please put me on your mailing list. Thank you" ...**Otis L. Lorton, Cowden, IL**. "This year's lecture series for the 26th annual St. Louis Area-Wide Lectureship will be held Sept. 21-23, 2006 at the Arnold Church of Christ, 2267 Scott Dr., Arnold, MO 63010. For more information you may contact Jerry R. Reynolds, c/o Sunnyview Church of Christ, 2801 Highway H., Farmington, MO 63640. Ph. (573) 756-5925. The lecture series will feature Rod Rutherford, Paul Sain, B. J. Clarke, Jim Dearman and Terry Mabery" ...**Patrick J. Harper, Jerseyville, IL**. "I want to thank you for sending it to me and my family" ...**Enoch & Jane, Louisville, KY**.

Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **East End Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is mailed FREE upon request. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; Titus 2:1; II Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless otherwise noted. Articles are also welcomed.

Editor: **Garland M. Robinson**

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